Parallel Literature in Maithili and Videha Maithili Literature Movement

T.K. Oommen writes in the "Linguistic Diversity" Chapter of "Sociology", 1988, page 291, National Law School of India University/ Bar Council of India Trust book: "... the Maithili region is found to be economically and culturally dominated by Brahmins and if a separate Maithili State is formed, they may easily get entrenched as the political elite also. This may not be to the liking and advantage of several other castes, the traditionally entrenched or currently ascendant castes. Therefore, in all possibility the latter groups may oppose the formation of a separate Maithili state although they also belong to the Maithili speech community. This type of opposition adversely affects the development of several languages."

T.K. Oomen further writes: "... even when a language is pronounced to be distinct from Hindi, it may be treated as a dialect of Hindi. For example, both Grierson who undertook the classic linguistic survey of India and S. K. Chatterjee, the national professor of linguistics, stated that Maithili is a distinct language. But yet it is treated as a dialect of Hindi". (Ibid, page 293)

Parallel Literature

The references to parallel literature are found in Vedas, where Narashanshi is referred to as parallel literature.

Parallel Literature in Maithili

The need for parallel literature in Maithili arose due to the constant onslaught on literature and dignity by the Public and Private Academies, for example, Maithili-Bhojpuri Akademi of Delhi, Maithili Akademi of Patna, Sahitya Akademi of Delhi, Nepal's Prajna Pratishthan, all of which are government Academies. In addition to these Academies, the onslaught on Maithili Literature and dignity was constantly done by the so-called literary associations which were recognised by the Sahitya Akademi and were the main tool for usurping all the literary space meant for this language. Besides these, the funding to these and other parochial associations and organisations led to the presentation of an interface in the name of Maithili, which was mediocre and non-representative.

The Book of Bihari Literature (Abhay K. Editor)

This book contains five translations from non-representative Maithili short stories into English by Vidyanand Jha. Nagarjun (Maithili's Yatri) and Usha Kiran Khan are from the Hindi quota though both got the Sahitya Akademi prize from the Maithili quota. Vibha Rani and Rajkamal Chaudhary are from the Maithili quota though both wrote in Hindi also.

This book is edited by Abhay K. who has read Samskrit only up to high school. Yet he pretends to translate Arthashastra directly from Samskrit into English. I am Kovid in Samskrit and from the quality of the translation, I can presume that he has used some intermediary language in translating Samskrit texts into English. It is a matter of ethics to acknowledge the source.

Vidyanand Jha's translation is below par, for example, he has no inkling what would be the English word for 'olak sanna', and there are plenty of such instances. I have some suggestions for him: First, read A Bird's Eye View on Mithila by Rajnath Mishra, it mentions all the terms for which you could not find English equivalents. Then go to the Videha archive (www.videha.co.in) and look for Umesh Mandal's Picture Dictionary containing vegetation, animals and skill sets of Mithila, here you will find the actual photographs too. Further, under A Parallel History of Maithili Literature (Videha www.videha.co.in), you will find sample English translations of some Maithili short stories. Therefore, what Vidyanand Jha is presenting as exotic is the original thing of the Maithili Language (but not that of Maithili literature, as was two decades ago). Interestingly his choice of short stories reminds me of Contemporary Maithili Short

Stories (Maithili short stories translated into English) edited by Murari Madhusudan Thakur and published by the Sahitya Akademi in 2005. It seems that the stories in this selection are leftover material from that collection. Rip Van Winkle awoke after two decades but Vidyanand Jha is still in slumber not realizing the changes that have happened during the period.

If you compare the translation of this selection vis-a-vis the English translation of Latin American Spanish literature, you would be able to understand the difference.

But these types of selections are not known for their literary excellence, Harper Collins publishes these types of selections for five-star hotels and Airport lounges. The publishers announced this book on March 22, 2022. So, in 6-7 months, you will get old materials only.

The Bride: The Maithili Classic Kanyadan by Harimohan Jha (1908-1984) translated into English by Lalit Kumar (Assistant Professor, Department of English, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya College, University of Delhi)- Harper Perennial (Harper Collins Publishers)

I had pre-ordered the book, which was scheduled to be delivered to my kindle account on the 1st of December 2022, but the delivery date was postponed, and it was delivered to my account on the 14th of December 2022.

When Maithili was recognised by the Sahitya Akademi (National Academy of Letters- of India) way back in 1965, Late Ramanath Jha stated that his Maithili language is saved now (Maithilik Vartman Samasya, Ramanath Jha).

Sh. Harish Trivedi has committed the same

mistake. In his foreword Harish Trivedi writes- “In Hindi, the language to which Maithili is the closest (and of which it was indeed an integral part until it was granted recognition as a separate language by the constitution in 1993) ….”

Harish Trivedi refers to the inclusion of Maithili in the eighth schedule of the constitution of India. Here the year mentioned should be 2003 instead of 1993. Moreover, Maithili was a separate language in 2003, 1993, and 1965 and during the time of pre-Jyotirishwara Vidyapati. The status granted to Maithili by Sahitya Akademi and the Constitution of India, on the other hand, strengthened the hands of the obscurantist elements like Ramanath Jha, Shardananda Jha (he is not a famous person but why I have taken his name, I will explain it later) and others who gaslighted Harimohan Jha. Harimohan Jha’s Khattar Kakak Tarang, Pranamya Devata,

Rangshala and Charchari all these books were eligible for the Sahitya Akademi Award initiated in 1966 for Maithili (because of recognition given to Maithili by Sahitya Akademi in 1965. But a philosophy treatise was awarded the prize in 1966, this philosophy book itself is a horrific one, and if one has read the book to understand the nuances of Indian Philosophy, then he will have to unlearn first to be able to grasp the philosophical concepts from a new book on Indian Philosophy. In 1967 no award was given for the Maithili Language.

Ramanath Jha's obscurantism vis-à-vis Panji is evident from one example (because Lalit Kumar also seems to have followed in his footstep, though he gives credit for his ignorance to some other writers). He was casteist, conservative and confused. The inter-caste marriage in Panji was well known to him (but he chose to keep the

Dooshan Panji secret- which has been released by us on google books in 2009), and it was apparent that the great navya-nyaya philosopher Gangesh Upadhyaya married a "Charmkarini" and was born five years after the death of his father (see our Panji Books Vol I & II available at http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm). Sh. Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya writes in the "History of Navya-Nyaya in Mithila".

"The family which was inferior in social status is now extinct in Mithila- Gangesha's family is completely ignored and we are not expected to know even his father's name.", which is a total falsehood. He writes further that all this information was given to him by Prof. R. Jha. So how would this casteist-conservative-confused allow the award to be given to Sh Harimohan Jha? So, the Sahitya Akademi saved the Maithili Language by recognizing it, as asserted by Prof. R.

Jha, is wrong and so is the assertion made by Sh. Harish Trivedi.

Mr Lalit Kumar is a young person, but he is being misused by some obscurantist elements, who gaslighted Harimohan Jha. Harimohan Jha stopped writing in Maithili following the recognition of it by Sahitya Akademi and was awarded the Sahitya Akademi prize for his autobiography in 1985, after his death, which means nothing.

Mr Lalit Kumar writes- "Yoganand Jha's Bhalmanusha (1944) and Shardananda Jha's Jayabara (1946) attack such social divisions that played a decisive role in marriages." Yoganand Jha's Bhalmanusha (1944) was indeed a pathbreaking novel, but Shardananda Jha's novel was reactionary. Prof Radha Krishna Choudhary rightly observes- "Yoganand Jha's 'Bhalamanusa' deals with the social problems connected with the

problem of marriage. As a reply to this novel, Shardanand Jha wrote a second-rate novel 'Jayabara,' having little literary merit. (RADHAKRISHNA CHOUDHARY A Survey of Maithili Literature)

Mr Lalit Kumar for his Panji-related ignorance gives credit to Mm. Parmeshwar Jha's "Mithila Tattva-Vimarsha." Prof Radha Krishna Choudhary rightly observes- "Mm. Parmeshwar Jha's 'Mithila Tattva-Vimarsha' is the history of Mithila in Maithili prose and is based mainly on tradition. Mm. Mukunda Jha Bakshi's 'Mithilabhashamaya Itihas' gives an account of the Khandawala dynasty. From the point of view of modern Maithili prose, these two works are important, though from the historical point of view, are unreliable. (RADHAKRISHNA CHOUDHARY A Survey of Maithili Literature)

The following excerpt from Our Panji Prabandh (part I&II) is being reproduced below for ready-reference: -

महाराज हरसिंहदेव- मिथिलाक कर्णाट वंशक। ज्योतिरीश्वर ठाकुरक वर्ण-रत्नाकरमे हरसिंहदेव नायक आकि राजा छलाह। 1294 ई. मे जन्म आ 1307 ई. मे राजसिंहासन। घियासुद्दीन तुगलकसँ 1324-25 ई. मे हारिक बाद नेपाल पलायन। मिथिलाक पञ्जी-प्रबन्धक ब्राह्मण, कायस्थ आ क्षत्रिय मध्य आधिकारिक स्थापक, मैथिल ब्राह्मणक हेतु गुणाकर झा, कर्ण कायस्थक लेल शंकरदत्त, आ क्षत्रियक हेतु विजयदत्त एहि हेतु प्रथमतया नियुक्त भेलाह। हरसिंहदेवक प्रेरणासँ- आ ई हरसिंहदेव नान्यदेवक वंशज छलाह, जे नान्यदेव कार्णाट वंशक १००९ शाकेमे स्थापना केने रहथि- नन्दैद शुन्यं शशि शाक वर्षे (१०१९ शाके)... मिथिलाक पण्डित लोकनि शाके १२४८ तदनुसार १३२६ ई. मे पञ्जी-प्रबन्धक वर्तमान स्वरूपक प्रारम्भक निर्णय कएलन्हि। पुनः वर्तमान स्वरूपमे थोडे बुद्धि विलासी लोकनि मिथिलेश महाराज माधव सिंहसँ १७६० ई. मे आदेश करबाए पञ्जीकारसँ शाखा पुस्तकक प्रणयन करबओलन्हि। ओकर बाद पाँजिमे (कखनो काल वर्णित १६०० शाके माने १६७८ ई. वास्तवमे माधव सिंहक बादमे १८०० ई.क आसपास) श्रोत्रिय नामक एकटा नव ब्राह्मण उपजातिक मिथिलामे उत्पत्ति भेल।

So, the Srotriyas as a sub-caste arose around 1800 CE as per authentic panji files.

Sh. Anshuman Pandey [Gajendra Thakur of New Delhi provided me with digitized copies of the genealogical records of the Maithil Brahmins. The pañjīkara-s whose families have maintained these records for generations are often reluctant to allow others to pursue their records. It is a matter of 'intellectual property' to them. I was fortunate enough to receive a complete digitized set of pañjī records from Gajendra Thakur of New Delhi in 2007. [Recasting the Brahmin in Medieval Mithila: Origins of Caste Identity among the Maithil Brahmins of North Bihar by Anshuman Pandey, A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History) in the University of Michigan 2014]. Later these Panji Manuscripts were uploaded to google books in 2009).

The so-called Maharajas of Darbhanga were permanent settlement zamindars of Cornwallis, and there were so many in British India, but in

Nepal there were none. In the annexure of our book (Panji Prabandh vol I&II), we have attached copies of genealogy-based upgradation orders (proof of upgradation for cash). So, before 1800 CE, there was no srotriya sub-caste in British India and there is no such sub-caste within Maithil Brahmins in Nepal part of Mithila even today. Srotriya before that referred to following some education stream in British India, in Nepal it still has that meaning.

Mr Lalit Kumar further tries to put his agenda by writing – “Harimohan choose a middle ground in his reformist agenda.” He gives laughable reasons for his contention viz. “he espouses the significance of local traditions, languages, scripts, education system, and moral values” thereby meaning that these are conservative values!

(All the referred books are available for free pdf download from the link http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm)

VIDEHA MAITHILI LITERATURE MOVEMENT AND A PARALLEL HISTORY OF MAITHILI LITERATURE

Therefore, the missing portions, the ignored and non-represented aspects of society, started to be chronicled. It led to the depiction marked by the richness of vocabulary and experiences and was a revolution in literature and art as far as people speaking Maithili are concerned. The quality now has not remained mediocre. The real power of the Maithili language was realised by the native speakers, mediocrity was replaced by excellence. This attempt at the writing of History of Parallel Literature for the Maithili Language arose as the mediocre agency (private and governmental) funded so-called mainstream literature, which has no readership, and no acceptance among the speakers of Maithili continued to be presented by these Akademies as representative literature. The mediocre interface of Maithili literature was

presented by the government radio and television stations also. Literary journals like Museindia (www.museindia.com) & Publishers like Harper Collins were also used for their sinister design.

RAJDEO MANDAL- THE POET, THE NOVELIST

The constant shedding of Tears -Maithili poem by Sh. Rajdeo Mandal - from his anthology of poems "Ambara"

Out of the eyes of my beloved
tears like a river
always keep flowing
and in that water of tears
people plunge
some feel cold
and some feel hot
some say wow!
and some feel bad.
but my blind-deaf accomplice
does not care,
her tears always keep flowing
but after some time, her tears stopped coming out

now perhaps she has emptied herself of tear
or
is she storing it!?

The verse is not a popular genre, but it is appreciated by a few. For a language like Sanskrit, the volunteers who are engaged in its popularisation, are using simple Sanskrit prose for it. They translate short stories and novels from other Indian languages into simple Sanskrit. Here the translation of the verse is barred as the verse is read by none. In a language, the number of speakers is so little that a need has been felt for organising camps for its spoken form, translation from verse into that language is considered a misuse of resources.

In Maithili, the situation has become grave. If we envisage a situation where there are no villages

left, the number of speakers of this language would become almost NIL. People would speak in Maithili only in seminars and sittings. The need is already being felt for pronunciation and vocabulary enrichment classes even for the authors and singers of Maithili.

Then what is the purpose of writing verse in this language? What is the purpose and what is the need for it? People write verse due to paucity of time, as the other genres require the devotion of more time. The situation becomes even more grave when people give the reason for writing verses in this way.

In this situation, the happenings of the neighbourhood, personal ambition, derogatory remarks about others; and the travelogue, all have become the subject matter of verse. But why not use prose for these kinds of subjects? The short

stories are transformed into drama form to stage it. But what is the purpose of converting prose into a poem?

The answer is both obvious and simple for those who know the so-called dried main channel of Maithili literature. The readers of the converted poems are only the partisan-critiques. And writers of those great poems themselves throw eulogies on themselves as they have understood the call for self-sufficiency in this way. Why depend on others for it? They write long prefaces in prose and add it to their collection of verses, declaring their verses as great and path-breaking!

Who will understand the value of the creation of verse? The personal worldly experiences, if these are not allowed to percolate deep down, would not be able to transform into epic poems, even though

those might be in rhythm. The spiritual and other-worldly thinking, howsoever non-concrete would still not be able to mesmerise, if that is not able to meet the worldly and make itself relevant, even though it is non-rhythmic or subscribes to a particular partisan grouping or uses crutches of ideology. The essential needs of man are food, clothes, and housing. And after that the spiritual thinking and related needs. When Buddha asked this question to all those who were seen participating in the festivities, asked whether they know the eventuality of death and if they do, how can they participate in those festivities. Likewise, the modern Maithili poets, when they find the base of their language-culture and economics missing behind their feet, even then they refuse to accept that truth and then they try to insert the -isms to the national-international happenings into their poems, they want to create patronising literature for the depressed classes and the natives, they

want to become a benefactor and so it fails to have a cutting-edge effect.

But when Rajdeo Mandal writes:

From the percolating drops of blood
The earth has become freshly bathed
The bird then asks
Asks from its heart
In the incoming heavy and pitch-dark night
Would our species survive?

, then it goes into our blood and the blood starts running fast. The species of the poetics of the poet or the species of that bird? No nod of partisan critiques or a self-obsessed preface is required for this poem. No cartel or crutches of ideology are required for this creation.

So, the poem needs excellence. It requires a base of language and culture. It does not need imported plots and subjects, which are imported to do favours to the poem. It also does not need the imported emotion, which would be a superficial attempt for searching for the disappearing language, and culture, which has gone missing, and during times of dwindling economy of the region.

A good poem can be written on any subject, it can be written on the anxiety of Buddha, regarding the future of humankind, for consoling the heart also otherwise people will have to go to the pseudo-preachers, on and for the language, culture, and economy otherwise, we will soon have to start camps for Maithili. The transmigration of imagery is also required, otherwise, we will have to create an artificial atmosphere for the poet; for their poems, we will have to arrange stages, and a

staging camp will have to be organised for their artificial vocabulary and ideology. And people would have to be trained for it. The poets of the so-called mainline of the dried drain are just doing that.

The rhythm and ups and downs of the Maithili language, the cultural and professional superiority of its proletariat brimming with confidence, having all kinds of professional and cultural skills, the superiority of its cooperative living style, cultural conservatism, polity, daily affairs, social values, morality, economic situation and adaptation amid flood-ravaged economy; the religion and philosophy all should be the subject of Maithili poem. And if that does not happen it would become one-sided, it will get entrenched after getting lopsided, would become dead, fit to be framed and put onto the wall.

To create poetry is a necessity, a literary urge for creation fulfilling this urge. When the people of Mithila would go to the camps for learning the Maithili language, then can only we start questioning the need for writing poems and the purpose for creating all types of verse forms. Only then we should discuss the futility of writing poems in Maithili. And that day must not come, for the poets would have to remain alert. And so is Rajdeo Mandal and that is why "Ambara" a collection of poems written by him has become the best collection of this genre in the first decade of the 21st Century. His anthology of poems "Vasundhara" is the next step. The excellence of verse created by Rajdeo Mandal is because of its foundation, the foundation of language and culture. The excellence is because he does not have to import the contents of his subjects. He does not import emotions either, you will find none. The expressions of his imagery lie in the rich

vocabulary that he possesses. Creating a poem is the only way left for Rajdeo Mandal. He must create poems; it is a literary hunger and essentiality of his literary existence. The emotions are poured out in a spinning rhythm and become his poetry.

"Rahab Ahink Sang"- (Will remain with you only)- From "Ambara"

Crying, calling

My throat dried

The lips dried

As if I was thirsty

The corpses all around

Are laughing at me

Nobody is listening to my voice

Where has gone

My society

It was necessary to break

The conservatism

Turning of direction

For the future

You all are yourself the Greats

Move forward and leave the squabbling

No interruption will be able to stop it

I have not done any big crime

Hey respected you, come here

Do not get angry

I will not break any law henceforth

I will not bother any of you now-on

Keep your kingdom

I do not want the headgear, the throne

I will not change my colour anymore

I will be with you all only, peacefully.

RAJDEO MANDAL- THE FICTION WRITER

"Paro" of Nagarjun-Yatri, (notwithstanding the unanswered question of whether it was written originally in Maithili or was a translation from Hindi into Maithili by the author himself) did depict first-hand hand account of the dwindling culture of his Maithil Brahmin caste of contemporary times. He did depict the socio-cultural situation of the period. The novel "Hamar Tol" (My quarter of the village) by Rajdeo Mandal is a first-hand account of his "Dhanuk" caste of Mithila and has been written in the settings of the socio-cultural situation that this caste is peculiarly placed in. He inserts everything in it, the belief, which is sometimes not rational; social reform, love, hate, hope as well as disappointment. There was a void after Lalit. The mainstream, as it is called, writers of the Maithili language got themselves into a maze due to their chosen subjects. The dark enveloped the literary

scene wherein they found the exit tough, the going-on impossible.

The "Hamar Tol" of Rajdeo Mandal purifies the account of the second-hand account by Lalit in "Prithviputra;" as a result, the parallel movement of the stream was able to take along the main course of literature and moved it forward and made it relevant.

The author, being a realistic writer, has been forced to make the ending a tragic one. He refuses to see some struggles or is not able to see those, or nobody can see these. But he gives details of those struggles too.

"Everyone left the scene in a hurry.

There began a fight between the Crow and the Myna. That fight remained unseen, only the tree saw it. And the tree saw many more things, yet the

tree remained silent".

The complexity and perplexity of that silence could be refined and presented owing to the first-hand experiences of those unseen things by second-hand accounts. And that is why this novel has secured its position in the literary history of Maithili literature.

Five short stories by Rajdeo Mandal

Rajdeo Mandal adjudged the following five stories as the best of his short stories:

Rusal Bauwa (An Angry Boy)
Avak (Speechless)
Bechuak Suiter (A Sweater for Bechua)
Electionak Bhoot (The Ghost of Election)
and Rakhbar (The Village Guard).

The first one Rusal Bauwa (An Angry Boy) was written for the "82nd Sagar Raati Deep Jaray", a night-long short story recitation programme held every three months in the villages of Mithila, where the short-story writers read their new and unpublished short stories. Another writer critically acclaims the read short stories and the process goes from evening to morning. This time it was

decided that only children's literature (short stories) would be recited, and this event was held in my village. The criticism of Rajdeo Mandal's short story was assigned to Narayani. Narayanji noted that this short story reminded him of Premchand's famous short-story Idgah. The story goes on like that. The son of Fekan is angry, he wants new clothes otherwise he will not go to the Durga Pooja fair. The son of Dhirendra Babu has new clothes. Dhirendra Babu is rich, but Fekan is poor, but his son is much ahead of Amit, son of Dhirendra Babu in every respect, be it study or sports. A discussion ensues between Fekan and his wife, his wife accuses him of not fulfilling his responsibility even towards his son. His son listens to all these discussions and consoles his father.

Avak (Speechless) begins with some hilarious moments. Jitu reaches his in-law's house where his brother-in-law introduces him to his friend. This

person seems to be part of the robber gang, and he saved his life.

Bechuak Suiter (A Sweater for Bechua) deals with bonded labour, and poverty and hints at thinking along caste lines among the police force also. The boy at the teashop is a child labourer. It depicts entrenched corruption in the police force.

Electionak Bhoot (The Ghost of Election) is a commentary on the electoral process and democracy. The craft where the protagonist depicts a sequence of events, which turns out to be happening in his dream, is a wonderful treat.

Rakhbar (The Village Guard) is the story of Musba, the guard. His son gives a spear to his wife (Musba's daughter-in-law) and instructs her to pierce the body of Musba in case Musba quarrels

with her. Musba, who is a terror outside is tamed inside his house. Then the wordplay extends to the story of Sumna who attacks him when he is behaving lecherously with her.

In all the stories you will find the use of words and contexts which is absent in mainstream literature. The vibrant life, the story of gloom, and cultural paraphernalia even amid poverty were never heard of before the parallel tradition storytellers came to the scene.